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REVIEW OF THE IMPLEMENTATION OF COMMITMENTS AND OF OTHER PROVISIONS OF THE CONVENTION

REVIEW OF INFORMATION COMMUNICATED UNDER ARTICLE 12

NATIONAL COMMUNICATIONS FROM PARTIES INCLUDED IN ANNEX I TO THE CONVENTION

Interim assessment of the in-depth reviews

Note by the secretariat

I. MANDATE

1. The Subsidiary Body for Implementation (SBI) at its seventh session expressed its intention to perform an interim assessment of the in-depth reviews of second national communications for its ninth session and requested the secretariat to provide relevant information, including recommendations and suggestions to improve the process (FCCC/SBI/1997/21, paragraph 11(e)).

II. SCOPE OF THE NOTE

2. At the time of the preparation of this note the secretariat had conducted 14 in-depth reviews (IDR) of second communications from Annex I Parties (see annex to this note for the dates of the visits conducted and planned). Although the number of in-depth review visits

undertaken so far is not sufficient to draw general conclusions on the conduct of the review process, some observations and suggestions can be made at this stage. The present note is intended to facilitate the interim assessment of the review process and initiate discussion on possible further continuation of this process for the purposes of both the Convention and, in due course, the Kyoto Protocol.

3. Detailed information on issues arising from national communications is contained in the second compilation and synthesis report on second national communications from Annex I Parties (FCCC/CP/1998/11 and Add.1 and 2).

III. EXPERIENCE WITH THE REVIEW PROCESS

4. The purpose of the review process, as defined in decision 2/CP.1 of the first session of the Conference of the Parties (see FCCC/CP/1995/7/Add.1), is to review, in a facilitative, non-confrontational, open and transparent manner, the information contained in the communications from Annex I Parties to ensure that the Conference of the Parties has accurate, consistent and relevant information at its disposal to assist it in carrying out its responsibilities.

A. Conduct of the reviews

5. The review process consists of a number of stages, including preparation in consultation with host countries of the schedule of visits; selecting team members from the roster of government-nominated experts according to their skills, qualifications and language proficiency, geographical distribution also being an important consideration; assigning tasks to team members before, during and after the country visit and ensuring that proper pre-visit preparations take place; drafting of parts of the report by individual team members during the visit; compiling these parts into a final draft by the member of the secretariat who is coordinator of the visit; sending the final draft for comment to the team members; incorporating their suggestions into the draft; sending it to the host country for comment; and incorporating factual corrections made by the host country; final editing, translation into official United Nations languages and publication.

6. To provide the subsidiary bodies and the Conference of the Parties with the relevant information, in-depth review teams coordinated by the secretariat meet with the representatives of Annex I Party governments, industry, non-governmental organizations and academia to review key qualitative information and quantitative data contained in national communications; to review policies and measures described in national communications; to assess the information contained in national communications against Convention commitments, and assess the extent to which progress towards the objective of the Convention is being achieved. In a number of cases, additional information provided to the teams at their request made it possible to clarify specific issues related to national greenhouse gas (GHG) inventories, or to identify important measures which were adopted by a Party since publication of the national communication or not included in it for various reasons.

7. Several Annex I Parties indicated that in-depth review visits helped them to mobilize additional resources and expertise and to take into account observations and suggestions made by the teams of experts. They also noted that in-depth reviews of their first communications had resulted in considerably higher quality of information included in the second national communications. Several Parties remarked on the utility of the present process taking place immediately after the adoption of the Kyoto Protocol. In their opinion, this contributes to the appraisal of national activities related to climate change under the Convention and assists in preparing for further actions which would be required prior to and after the entry into force of the Protocol to meet their respective commitments.

8. The review process is also seen as a confidence building one in which experts, irrespective of their country of origin, be it developing, economy in transition or developed, work on an equal footing, share their experience and discuss and resolve problems. In general, government-nominated experts possess the qualifications required for the conduct of in-depth reviews. Participation of experts from non-Annex I Parties in the review of national communications from Annex I Parties adds a valuable component to the process of capacity building. Many of these experts are or may be involved in the preparation of national communications from their countries and the experience gained during the reviews will undoubtedly be used to full extent in this process. The secretariat is endeavouring to increase the number of non-Annex I Party experts participating in the reviews during the period 1998-1999, and in this regard appreciates the additional financial contributions made or pledged by the Governments of Sweden and Switzerland.

B. Issues related to national communications

9. One of the important tasks of the in-depth review process is identifying to what extent the revised guidelines for the preparation of national communications by Parties included in Annex I to the Convention (UNFCCC guidelines) had been followed. Relevant information collected by the teams is taken into account when preparing suggestions and recommendations for further improvement of the reporting guidelines in the framework of the methodological work (see FCCC/SBSTA/1998/7 and FCCC/SBSTA/1998/8).

10. In some reviews, it was noted that the UNFCCC guidelines were not followed fully since some national experts involved in drafting individual chapters were not aware of their requirements. Such cases confirm the importance of good communication among the different officials and experts involved in preparing a national communication.

11. Although, as mentioned above, the quality of information in the second national communications has substantially improved compared to the first ones and some Annex I Parties stressed that this was a direct result of the in-depth review process, the teams often felt that consistent national procedures for the collection and reporting of information on climate change policies were not always in place. This can be partially explained by the fact that there was (and still is) no firm schedule for the preparation and submission of national communications subsequent to the second ones. In these circumstances, a number of governments could not justify the establishment and maintenance of such procedures requiring substantial investment of time and funds for a process with no clear periodicity and deadlines.

12. The latter observation does not apply to the collection and reporting of GHG inventories. With the adoption of decision 9/CP.2 (FCCC/CP/1996/15/Add.1), requiring Annex I Parties to submit national GHG inventories annually, in the majority of Annex I Parties visited by the review teams there exist procedures of varying degrees of sophistication for collection of national data needed to prepare and report GHG emission inventories. With the adoption of the Kyoto Protocol, Annex I Parties will need to look ahead to the establishment of national systems for the collection and reporting of the relevant information and data, and some of them have already started doing so.

13. During the reviews, difficulties with estimating the effects of policies and measures were mentioned by practically all Parties. All Parties reviewed so far indicated problems they had in fulfilling the requirements of the UNFCCC reporting guidelines related to effects of policies and measures. In those cases where information on the effects of policies and measures was presented in national communications, it was not always possible to see how these estimates had been arrived at. In spite of their best efforts, few Parties have in place monitoring mechanisms or procedures which they feel are adequate to evaluate progress with implementation of policies and measures quantitatively. In-depth review visits allowed useful insights to be gained on this issue.

C. Focus of in-depth reviews

14. In-depth reviews provide an insight into the intricacies of national policy-making related to climate change. In particular they seek to identify to what extent Annex I Parties have succeeded in establishing coherent climate change policies and whether these are integrated in national economic strategies. In-depth reviews attempt to clarify how policies and measures reported in national communications serve the purposes of the Convention even if they were adopted and implemented for reasons other than climate change considerations. The team members focus their attention on those sectors where GHG emissions are largest or fastest growing. In discussions with the host country officials, industry representatives and non-governmental organizations, they attempt to identify why a particular type of policy or measure had been used, and whether in the opinion of the host country their effects could be assessed and monitored.

15. Special attention is given to the energy sector, especially to the impact on GHG emissions of the liberalization of electricity markets taking place in a number of Annex I Parties. Another sector under scrutiny of the review teams is transport, the fastest growing source of GHG emissions in virtually all Annex I Parties. Since in the majority of countries with a large automobile industry the main policy instruments are voluntary agreements with manufacturers, the review teams are particularly interested in the functioning of these agreements, their monitoring and expected effects.

16. In-depth reviews seem to indicate that diverging perspectives and priorities of various national ministries and agencies involved in formulating and implementing policies and measures relative to climate change sometimes pose significant challenges to governments.

Although many Annex I Parties have established national inter-agency groups or committees on climate change, these bodies are, as a general rule, of a consultative nature and their recommendations may conflict with other national goals or compete for limited government funding. Nevertheless, Annex I Parties have made considerable efforts to integrate climate change considerations in the national economic policies, although solving pressing economic and social problems, such as unemployment, clearly remains a priority.

IV. POSSIBLE ACTION BY THE CONFERENCE OF THE PARTIES AND ITS SUBSIDIARY BODIES

17. The Conference of the Parties may wish to consider adopting a decision on the scheduling of third and, possibly, subsequent national communications from Annex I Parties. Adoption of such a decision would assist Annex I Parties in preparing their activities related to the Convention and, in due course, the Kyoto Protocol and facilitate further action related to the review process. It may be recalled that the SBI at its eighth session initiated the discussion on the scheduling of submission of third and subsequent national communications by Annex I Parties and agreed with the thrust of the proposals contained in document FCCC/SBI/1998/INF.1. The SBI further invited Parties to submit by 1 September 1998 their views on subsequent national communications so that the secretariat could compile the submissions of Parties in a miscellaneous document for consideration by the SBI at its ninth session. These views are compiled in document FCCC/CP/1998/MISC.8.

18. The Conference may wish to request the SBI and the Subsidiary Body for Scientific and Technological Advice (SBSTA) to consider at their tenth sessions how the future in-depth review process could be conducted, reported and considered. For example, Parties might wish to consider the extent to which review teams could bring forward to the subsidiary bodies and/or Parties information on specific issues related to the national communications. Parties may also wish to consider whether the in-depth review process should be adapted for other purposes, such as specialized sectoral reviews with a view to facilitating formulation, implementation and regular updating of national and, where appropriate, regional programmes containing measures to mitigate climate change, as required under Article 4.1(b) of the Convention, and comparison of individual countries' projections of GHG emissions.

19. Also, in the context of considering an approach to developing guidelines for the national systems requested by Article 5.1 of the Kyoto Protocol, the SBI and SBSTA may wish to assess the feasibility of using future in-depth review country visits to evaluate the status of existing national procedures for the estimation of anthropogenic emissions by sources and removals by sinks of all GHGs not controlled by the Montreal Protocol.

20. To facilitate the above-mentioned consideration, the SBI and/or the SBSTA could request the secretariat to prepare documents related to these issues for their tenth sessions.

Annex

SECOND NATIONAL COMMUNICATIONS: STATUS OF SUBMISSION AS AT 1 SEPTEMBER 1998 AND SCHEDULE FOR REVIEW

Annex I Party	Communication due date	Communication received date	Review visit dates	Notes
Australia	15.04.97	04.12.97	07-11.10.98	Visit done
Austria	15.04.97	31.07.97	30.03-03.04.98	Visit done
Belgium	15.04.97	21.08.97	Early 1999	
Bulgaria	15.04.98	30.06.98	1999	
Canada	15.04.97	05.05.97	11-15.05.98	Visit done
Czech Republic	15.04.98	06.08.97	Early 1999	
Denmark	15.04.97	05.12.97	21-25.09.98	Confirmed
European Community	15.04.97	29.06.98	1999	
Estonia	15.04.98	31.03.98	1999	
Finland	15.04.97	15.04.97	11-15.05.98	Visit done
France	15.04.97	12.06.97	23-27.03.98	Visit done
Germany	15.04.97	16.04.97	16-20.02.98	Visit done
Greece	15.04.97	12.12.97	Early 1999	
Hungary	15.04.98	01.12.97	1999	
Iceland	15.04.97	06.08.97	14-18.09.98	Visit done
Ireland	15.04.97	08.07.97	05-08.05.98	Visit done
Italy	15.04.97	-	To be determined	Excerpt from NC2 received 27.03.98
Japan	15.04.97	02.12.97	30.11-04.12.98	Confirmed
Latvia	15.04.98	02.06.98	1999	
Lithuania	15.04.98	-	1999	
Luxembourg	15.04.97	-	Late 1998	Tentative

SECOND NATIONAL COMMUNICATIONS: STATUS OF SUBMISSION AS AT 1 SEPTEMBER 1998 AND SCHEDULE FOR REVIEW
(continued)

Annex I Party	Communication due date	Communication received date	Review visit dates	Notes
Netherlands	15.04.97.	14.04.97	28.09-02.10.98	Confirmed
New Zealand	15.04.97	27.05.97	31.08-04.09.98	Visit done
Norway	15.04.97	16.04.97	05-09.10.98	Confirmed
Poland	15.04.98	29.04.98	Early 1999	
Portugal	15.04.97	26.11.97	18-22.05.98	Visit done
Romania	15.04.98	-	1999	
Russian Federation	15.04.98	-	1999	Draft received 10.06.98
Slovakia	15.04.98	06.08.97	14-17.04.98	Visit done
Spain	15.04.97	22.11.97	05-09.10.98	Confirmed
Sweden	15.04.97	05.05.97	30.03-03.04.98	Visit done
Switzerland	15.04.97	21.04.97	10-13.03.98	Visit done
Ukraine	15.04.98 ?	-	1999	NC1 received in February 1998
United Kingdom	15.04.97	13.02.97	07-11.12.98	Confirmed
United States of America	15.04.97	11.08.97	20-24.04.98	Visit done

Note: NC1 denotes first national communication.
NC2 denotes second national communication.

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